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*Message from  
Councilwoman  
Barbara Watson.....*



Barbara Watson  
Council Member, Seat 2

### **Accelerated Reader Incentive Program**

June 15, 2006

Earlier this year, I began research to implement an incentive-based reading program in the schools in the City of Miami Gardens. My objective in seeking to implement an incentive-based reading program was to: **1.** promote a love for reading and learning, and; **2.** through incentives, motivate student participation and continuity.

My research revealed that Miami-Dade County currently has an optional reading program in place, known as *Accelerated Reader*, much like the one I planned to implement.

*Accelerated Reader* is a software-based program utilized by the schools, grades K-12, to provide teachers and media specialists with a computer-based method of monitoring the reading done by individual students. After the students choose and read a book, they are required to take on-line, multiple-choice quizzes to assess their reading comprehension. Points are then awarded based on the length and difficulty of the book. The software also keeps track of books read by the students as well as comprehension scores.

*Accelerated Reader* is an excellent way for students to develop fundamental and healthy reading habits. Additionally, because it is optional, students who chose to use it are learning to take control of their own learning experience.

I was happy to learn that the schools were already using *Accelerated Reader*, however, an incentive component of the magnitude I had in mind did not exist. I began focusing my efforts on the incentive plan, now known as the ***Accelerated Reader Incentive Program***.

The ***Accelerated Reader Incentive Program*** is a rewards-based plan aimed at increasing participation and encouraging continuous use of the *Accelerated Reader* software. Through the plan, students who meet the criteria will be awarded various rewards including field trips.

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The qualifications criterion of the incentive plan has two phases:

Phase 1 requires that the first year that the plan is rolled out in a school, the qualifications criterion for that school would be based on the number of books read. Kindergarten through second grade students will always be assessed using Phase 1 criteria.

Phase 2 requires that during the second and subsequent years at a school, qualifications would be based instead on the number of pages read, with that number increasing each year, according to grade level.

Changing the criteria to the number of pages read, opposed to the number of books read, may or may not reduce or increase the actual number of books a student completes. However, as the students advance to higher grades, this method will increase difficulty and challenge them in continuing to enhance their reading skills.

The ***Accelerated Reader Incentive Program*** was rolled out earlier this year with Hibiscus Elementary School as our pilot school. Each student was promised a trip to Wannado City if they successfully met the challenge of the program. Within weeks, 334 out of 600 students (55%) successfully met the challenge of program! **Through the generous support of corporate and individual sponsors, these deserving students were rewarded with their trip to Wannado City on Tuesday, May 16, 2006.**

As a way to motivate the remaining students to strive for the goal in the upcoming school year and also to recognize their efforts, they were provided ice cream treats, courtesy of **Velda Farms**.

The City of Miami Gardens boasts 18 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, and 2 high schools. My goal is to extend the ***Accelerated Reader Incentive Program*** to all of the schools in the City. Additionally, as it gains momentum, I plan to use it as a means of introducing other accelerated learning programs such as *Accelerated Vocabulary*, *Accelerated Writer*, and *Accelerated Math*.

I believe that active use of accelerated programs such as these will help students to become more productive as youngsters, thereby paving the way to more productive adult lives – business and community-wise. Additionally, because the use of these learning programs will be primarily student-initiated, I am convinced that through their prolific use, over time, we will also see measurable results in the schools' ratings and on state exams.

The ***Accelerated Reader Incentive Program*** is primarily funded by donations from the private sector and individuals. Many thanks to our corporate and individual sponsors who, by their financial and in-kind support, have demonstrated that they believe in the educational development of the City's youth. **Corporate sponsors include Dolphin Stadium, Matta International, Orange Bowl Foundation, Publix Super Markets Charities, and Velda Farms.** Special Platinum Sponsorships are available beginning at \$25,000.00. Partnership opportunities are also available.

To get information about how you can donate to the ***Accelerated Reader Incentive Program***, please call 305-622-8000, Ext. 2262.

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